



OIG

Office of Inspector General

U.S. Department of State • Broadcasting Board of Governors

ISP-I-16-29A

Office of Inspections

September 2016

Inspection of Embassy Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS

~~**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** This report is intended solely for the official use of the Department of State or the Broadcasting Board of Governors, or any agency or organization receiving a copy directly from the Office of Inspector General. No secondary distribution may be made, in whole or in part, outside the Department of State or the Broadcasting Board of Governors, by them or by other agencies or organizations, without prior authorization by the Inspector General. Public availability of the document will be determined by the Inspector General under the U.S. Code, 5 U.S.C. 552. Improper disclosure of this report may result in criminal, civil, or administrative penalties.~~



OIG HIGHLIGHTS

September 2016
OFFICE OF INSPECTIONS
Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

Inspection of Embassy Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

ISP-I-16-29A

What OIG Found

What OIG Inspected

OIG inspected the U.S. Embassy in Port of Spain from February 24 to March 11, 2016.

What OIG Recommended

OIG made 10 recommendations to Embassy Port of Spain to improve management operations and internal control.

- Embassy Port of Spain's chancery building was inadequate for secure diplomatic operations.
- Under the direction of the Management Officer, internal controls and customer service had improved.
- The Consular Section did not comply with Department of State procedures on processing visa referral cases.
- Embassy Port of Spain did not comply with Department of State and Federal regulations on records management.
- Despite inadequate network infrastructure throughout the chancery and the two annex buildings, the information management staff received high marks for computer services in the Department of State's 2015 annual customer satisfaction survey.

____ Office of Inspector General ____
U.S. Department of State • Broadcasting Board of Governors

CONTENTS

CONTEXT.....	1
EXECUTIVE DIRECTION.....	2
Tone at the Top and Standards of Conduct.....	2
Execution of Foreign Policy Goals and Objectives.....	2
Internal Control.....	4
Security, Crisis Management, and Safety of the Mission and Non-Official Americans.....	4
POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION.....	5
Countering ISIL.....	5
Political/Economic Reporting.....	5
Public Diplomacy.....	7
Consular Affairs.....	9
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.....	10
Management Operations.....	10
Facilities Management.....	11
Financial Management.....	13
Human Resources.....	13
Information Management and Information Security.....	13
MISSION SUPPORT SERVICES.....	15
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	17
PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS.....	18
APPENDIX A: PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY.....	19
APPENDIX B: FY 2015 STAFFING AND FUNDING BY AGENCY.....	21
ABBREVIATIONS.....	22
OIG INSPECTION TEAM MEMBERS.....	23

CONTEXT

Trinidad and Tobago is a twin island state in the Caribbean, slightly smaller than Delaware and home to approximately 1.2 million people. The country is only 7 miles from the coast of Venezuela, but it maintains historically close ties with the English-speaking Caribbean. The economy is anchored in petroleum products, primarily exports of natural gas, which has helped it achieve the third highest per capita income in the hemisphere. However, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, for the first time in several decades, is now facing revenue and budget constraints as a result of the decline in global oil prices. A recent drop in gas production coupled with lower prices contributed to a 1.5 percent decline in gross domestic product in 2015. Over the past two decades, Trinidad and Tobago has imported many of its needs, including food and personal consumables. The United States is its largest bilateral trading partner. The local American Chamber of Commerce represents major U.S. corporations as well as U.S. -licensed franchisees.

The FY 2016–18 Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) lists three mission goals: security, commerce, and governance. The United States provides no bilateral economic assistance. U.S. Government resources and programs are targeted at improving the capacity of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to detect, disrupt, and deter criminal activities, including narcotics smuggling, corruption and money laundering. The Department of State (Department) provides \$2 million in grants to train law enforcement, prison, and judicial officials. Another \$500,000 from the Department-funded International Military Education and Training program and Caribbean Basin Security Initiative supports training of military personnel.

In the past 3 years, approximately 100 Trinidad and Tobago nationals, including women and children, have traveled to Syria to join the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). U.S. Government resources and assets, including from the U.S. Southern Command, are engaged with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to equip and train law enforcement personnel to deal with a potential terrorist threat and to counter violent extremism in local communities.

The mission comprises 47 U.S. direct-hire employees and more than 121 locally employed (LE) staff members. Other U.S. agencies represented at the embassy are the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, and Justice. U.S. direct-hire employees receive a 20 percent cost of living allowance and a 10 percent hardship differential. The mission had been without an ambassador since October 2012. During the inspection, the Ambassador was confirmed and announced his intention to arrive in Port of Spain before the end of March 2016.

OIG also conducted a security assessment, covered in a classified annex to this report. It contains a comprehensive discussion of the conduct of the security program and issues affecting the safety of mission personnel and facilities.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

OIG based the following assessments of the embassy's leadership on the results of 133 documented interviews, 34 of which elicited comments on the Chargé d'Affaires (CDA) and the Acting Deputy Chief of Mission (A/DCM); meetings in Washington and Trinidad and Tobago; 115 questionnaires completed by U.S. direct-hire and LE staff members that included comments on Front Office performance; and OIG review of documents and observations of embassy meetings and activities during the course of the on-site inspection.

Tone at the Top and Standards of Conduct

In OIG surveys and interviews, U.S. direct-hire staff members gave the CDA high marks for planning strategically and managing conflict, attributes of leadership emphasized in 3 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 1214. However, OIG surveys and interviews also indicated the CDA was not communicating effectively with staff or fostering teamwork and resiliency within the embassy community, other leadership attributes in 3 FAM 1214. The CDA agreed to act on OIG advice that she increase her engagement with the embassy community as a whole, including hosting and attending embassy-wide social events and visiting staff members in their work areas. OIG also encouraged the CDA to instill a sense of community by conducting more town hall meetings with embassy staff, both to share information and to solicit feedback on issues affecting morale.

Execution of Foreign Policy Goals and Objectives

In lieu of an ambassador's Presidential Letter of Instruction, the CDA exercised Chief of Mission Authority under the provisions of 1 FAM 013.2 and 22 U.S.C. 3902(3). She led a collaborative interagency country team in pursuit of U.S. foreign policy objectives, consistent with her responsibilities under 2 FAM 113.1b and 18 FAM 005.1-7f. Heads of non-Department agencies told OIG that the CDA supported their programs. In September 2015, the CDA invited a team from the Department's Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources to facilitate the initial embassy off-site review and discussion of the mission's ICS goals, a process that led to a revised focus of the security goal. Heads of other agencies told OIG that the FY 2016-18 ICS reflected their respective agency equities.

Policy Engagement with Host Government

U.S. Government resources and programs were targeted at improving the capacity of the Trinidadian Government's law enforcement and security forces to detect, disrupt, and deter criminal activities. In addition to the Department, five other agencies with law enforcement agendas were represented at the embassy. The CDA's proactive consensus-building and coordination of the interagency deliberative process ensured that every agency's priorities and messages were consistent with overall U.S. Government policy goals and objectives for Trinidad and Tobago. This approach also enabled the CDA to fine tune agency expectations and assistance programs according to the host government's level of interest and ability to absorb funds. Her engagement with the highest levels of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago

served to focus its attention on important U.S. Government security goals and facilitated bilateral cooperation. For example, the bilateral Status of Forces Agreement was renewed in February, and the Technical Agreement between the United States Customs and Border Protection and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago was renewed in May 2016.

Public Outreach

The CDA considered public diplomacy important to the mission's ability to achieve its ICS objectives. In the past year, she conducted public outreach speaking engagements at the rate of two per month, but did not seek opportunities to engage with the media on policy. OIG advised the CDA to seek opportunities to do so.

Chancery Building Inadequate for Secure Diplomatic Operations

All embassy staff members interviewed by OIG cited the dilapidated, unsafe, and inadequate work space in the chancery and the complication of having offices scattered in three separate facilities as the primary factor negatively affecting embassy cohesiveness and employee productivity and morale. Built in 1949, the chancery is one of the oldest diplomatic facilities in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. It is a warren of cramped offices that could accommodate only 42 percent of total embassy staff. The remaining staff worked in two leased office facilities. In 2009, the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) assessed the chancery as seismically deficient. As detailed in the Management Section of this report and in the classified security annex, the chancery does not meet OBO building safety standards. Recommendations in the classified annex describe measures that should be taken by OBO and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security to mitigate these deficiencies.

Staff Morale Affected by Multiple Factors

OIG surveys and interviews indicated low U.S. direct-hire and LE staff morale at Embassy Port of Spain. Factors beyond the embassy control that affected morale included the inadequate office facilities, the long-term absence of a Community Liaison Officer, high crime and the high cost of living, inadequate schools, and an unresponsive and capacity-challenged host government. Other factors within embassy control included cultural sensitivity issues and poor customer service in the Management Section.

Lack of Cross Cultural Sensitivity and Civility in the Workplace

Officers of the Foreign Service Nationals Employee Association and LE and U.S. direct-hire employees described to OIG a lack of respect, trust, and fairness in the work place both within the LE staff community and between LE and U.S. direct-hire employees. This lack of civility and cultural sensitivity caused stress and directly affected employee productivity. The Regional Medical Officer/Psychiatrist (RMO/P) who visited the embassy in February 2016 told OIG that she had heard many of these same complaints and recommended to embassy leadership that it develop and conduct cross-cultural training focused on understanding and accommodating cultural differences in the work place for incoming U.S. direct-hire and LE staff members. OIG

concurred with this recommendation and further advised embassy leadership to work with the RMO/P to develop and conduct mandatory training on civility in the workplace for all employees.

Development of Human Capital: First- and Second-Tour Employees

The CDA did not adequately support the professional development of the First- and Second-Tour (FAST) employees, as required by 3 FAM 2242.4. In addition, the embassy lacked a formal program designed to develop their skills, leaving FAST employees without the professional and career guidance they need as they approached the mid-level ranks. The CDA did not meet regularly with FAST employees or the FAST program coordinator despite retaining responsibility for mentoring them. Mentoring and developing the professional skills of the next generation of future leaders is a Department-wide human resources priority and an attribute of leadership emphasized in 3 FAM 1214(8). Language in Department cable 14 STATE 19636 "Mentoring the Next Generation—Take Charge" provides guidance on developing an embassy FAST program.

Recommendation 1: Embassy Port of Spain should develop a structured professional development and mentoring program for First-and Second-Tour employees and issue it in an embassy Management Policy. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Internal Control

Statement of Assurance

Under the supervision of the CDA and the A/DCM, the Management Officer coordinated the review by all embassy sections of internal control and possible vulnerabilities that resulted in the 2015 Annual Chief of Mission Statement of Assurance. Detailed later in the report and in the classified annex, OIG found areas of noncompliance with Department standards in the Facilities Management, Information Management, and Security Units. The embassy corrected noncompliance found in the Financial Management and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Units during the inspection.

Visa Adjudication Review

The CDA performed nonimmigrant visa adjudication reviews, a required element of consular internal controls prescribed by 9 FAM 403.9-2d, for 100 percent of the adjudication days in 2015.

Security, Crisis Management, and Safety of the Mission and Non-Official Americans

Security personnel told OIG that both the CDA and A/DCM were involved in developing security policies and programs, as required by 2 FAM 113.1c(5), but that the CDA did not regularly participate in drills conducted by the Regional Security Office. Trinidad and Tobago is rated critical for crime. The Regional Security Office and Consular Section conducted outreach to non-

official Americans to inform them of the crime situation, consistent with the 2 FAM 113.1c(14) requirement to advise, assist, and protect U.S. citizens abroad.

Despite embassy offers to help organize a local Overseas Security Advisory Council, American companies resident in Trinidad and Tobago declined to establish a formal council. However, the Regional Security Officer met with security officers of American companies that requested briefings. The Regional Security Office told OIG it intended to canvass American Chamber of Commerce members again in April 2016 to assess the level of interest in establishing a local Overseas Security Advisory Council.

Embassy Port of Spain stressed the importance of emergency preparedness in this seismically active area. In June 2014, Washington-based crisis management trainers conducted an embassy emergency preparedness exercise based on an earthquake scenario. The Emergency Action Committee in December 2015 ordered a test of the embassy's satellite phones and radios and took additional measures to ensure that supplies were available for use in a post-earthquake situation.

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Countering ISIL

In the past 3 years, approximately 100 Trinidadian citizens (men and their families) joined ISIL as foreign fighters in Syria. However, Embassy Port of Spain did not have a program to combat violent extremism. Given ISIL success in recruiting Trinidadian citizens, a program implemented by the embassy to help the host government reach those most at risk of recruitment and radicalization would contribute to Global Coalition to Counter ISIL goals.

At the time of the inspection, the embassy considered offering assistance to the Trinidadian Government to help fight transnational criminal and violent extremist organizations. This would involve assigning a four-person Military Information Support Team to the embassy to assist the U.S. Southern Command and other interagency efforts in Trinidad and Tobago. Embassy leadership was unaware that the Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism Office of Combating Violent Extremism provides funding and design support for embassy-managed programs. OIG provided information to the CDA about this office and their programs and operations.

Political/Economic Reporting

Washington end-users expressed satisfaction with Political/Economic Section reporting, telling OIG that the section provided information needed to understand the U.S.-Trinidadian relationship. In particular, they considered the reporting on the Trinidadian foreign fighters and the analysis of their motivations for joining ISIL in Syria timely and comprehensive.

The Political/Economic Section developed a semi-annual reporting plan based on the key ICS elements. The section also produced a weekly roundup of political/economic events based on

input from all section staff members..OIG reviewed 75 cables prepared over 7 months and found that the messages were well-sourced and incorporated input from a wide variety of embassy offices, including the executive office.

Embassy Does Not Fully Use Record Emails

Embassy Port of Spain made limited use of record emails, as required in 5 FAM 443.2, even when the exchanges contain information that facilitated decision making and documented policy formulation and execution. None of the embassy officers received training on using record email. Failure to use the State Messaging and Archive Retrieval Toolset system hinders the Department's ability to retain and retrieve records, as required by the Federal Records Act.¹ During the inspection, the embassy published a management notice with guidance for record email use, but OIG noted no increase in its use during the course of the inspection.

Recommendation 2: Embassy Port of Spain should require that employees comply with Department guidance and preserve official correspondence by using the record email system. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

File Management Not in Accordance with Department and Federal Regulations

Embassy Port of Spain did not comply with Department and Federal regulations on records management. Although the Political/Economic Section maintained centralized electronic files, they were not properly organized, archived or retired. No single individual was responsible for the section's record management and none of the officers had received records management training. The Federal Records Act² and 5 FAM 410 require the Department to create and preserve records. Language in 5 FAM 414.5 and 5 Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)-4 H-214 require a standardized filing system to preserve record material, which includes substantive email reporting or deliberative process messages that are not sent by record email. Guidance in 5 FAH-4 H-218.3 requires that electronic records be maintained in a manner that permits easy and timely retrieval. Without a standardized filing system, the embassy risks being unable to maintain and retrieve electronic records in a timely fashion.

Recommendation 3: Embassy Port of Spain should implement a standardized filing system that complies with Department standards for records management. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

International Narcotics and Law Enforcement

The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs program was consistent with the embassy's ICS goals and supported engagement with the host government by other agencies at the mission. The office's portfolio focused on training law enforcement and judicial officials. The Grants Officer and Grants Officer Representative for all Bureau of International

¹ Federal Records Act of 1950, as amended, 44 U.S.C. Chapters 21, 29, 31, and 33.

² Ibid.

Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs grants are in Washington. For 2015, 25 Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs grants totaled approximately \$2 million.

Leahy Vetting

The embassy processed more than 238 cases over the past 3 years, in accordance with Leahy laws and policies.³ OIG reviewed the embassy's Leahy vetting procedures and found no issues.

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

Trinidad and Tobago received limited funding from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through a regional program administered out of the U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown, Barbados. One Embassy Port of Spain LE staff member from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention coordinated the program with the Trinidadian Government. In 2016, the U.S. Agency for International Development requested approval to open a PEPFAR program and office staffed with one local employee. Embassy action on the request was on hold pending a host government decision on the additional program. At the time of the inspection, however, the future of PEPFAR in Trinidad and Tobago was uncertain. The Centers for Disease Control's agreement with the Trinidadian Government expired in September 2015, but was extended for 1 year. The Trinidadian Government had yet to sign a new agreement.

Public Diplomacy

The Public Affairs Section operated in an environment in which the Public Affairs Officer could appear on TV morning talk shows to discuss educational exchanges and host guest speakers on topics such as social inclusion and the rule of law. The section was committed to the ICS goals of security, commerce, and governance, through programs such as an annual education fair that attracted 4,000 students and cultural programming that featured social inclusion and combatting domestic violence. The section also supported an international visitor leadership program featuring anti-ISIL messaging that recently sent a group of Muslim community leaders to the United States.

Not Enough Media Engagement

The Public Affairs Section used traditional and social media to announce upcoming activities, such as advertising for the Fulbright program, and the embassy Facebook page was rated the fourth most popular in the country. However, others in the embassy could do more, in accord with the Department's Decision Criteria for Tenure and Promotion in the Foreign Service. The CDA gave opening remarks at public diplomacy events but had not engaged the media in policy discussions, and senior-level officials could engage the media to encourage a fair hearing for U.S. policy perspectives. In addition, the embassy did not have an internal speakers program to

³ The Leahy Amendment to the Foreign Assistance act of 1961 prohibits the Department of State from furnishing assistance to foreign security forces if the Department receives credible information that such forces have committed gross violations of human rights. See 22 USC 2378d.

engage U.S. direct-hires in public outreach. OIG suggested that public outreach be written into work requirements and that the Public Affairs Section organize an internal speakers program.

The Public Affairs Section produced a daily media summary that would benefit by shifting the coverage away from crime stories in the newspapers to monitoring social media, which is important as a source of news as well as a means of broadcasting embassy public diplomacy activities.

Promoting Staff Development and Empowerment

In February 2015, the Public Affairs Officer began a program of personal development training for his six-person LE staff. The program consisted of formal sessions with outside speakers as well as informal LE staff gatherings to brainstorm on topics of interest. A key result was a free flowing conversation, including discussion of cultural perspectives on issues. All LE staff members told OIG the activities led to improved communications and a better understanding of what motivates their American colleagues. The result was more active LE staff initiative and participation in program planning, and improved programs.

Information Resource Center Rarely Used

The Information Resource Center had limited public appeal, receiving only two to three walk-in visitors per week. The Public Affairs Section told OIG that the center's appeal was inherently limited both by the security procedures that discourage visitors and by widespread internet access. The center received no American Spaces funding from the Bureau of International Information Programs, and the Information Resource Officer last visited in August 2012. Guidance in 1 FAM 014.1(a)(1-3) and 3 FAM 2614 (c) requires embassies to ensure the most effective use of Government resources. The resources used to maintain an underutilized Information Resource Center could be put to better use. After speaking to OIG, the Information Resource Officer in Washington contacted the Public Affairs Section to review how to repurpose the center's space and to reassign the LE staff to new duties to meet other program priorities.

Recommendation 4: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of International Information Programs, should develop a strategy to repurpose the Information Resource Center and to reassign the locally employed staff to duties that support program priorities. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with IIP)

Grants Files Lack Evidence of Monitoring

OIG examined 24 of the 33 grants files for FY 2015, ranging from \$2,050 to \$20,000, and found that 12 lacked proper documentation. (The remaining grants were for travel and donated equipment). In FY 2015, the Public Affairs Section allocated \$206,792 to grants from a total public affairs budget of \$566,723. OIG found that seven grants had no final report, as required in Foreign Assistance Policy Directive 3.01, and that five had final reports of an entire event (such as a film festival), but not on the specific activities funded by the grant. All 12 grants also failed to include evidence of monitoring performance. OIG found that while the six Public Affairs LE staff members had up-to-date Grants Officer Representative training, only one staff member

handled these duties, but did not monitor program activities as required in the Department's Federal Assistance Policy Directive 3.01. OIG's review of the section's grants did not indicate the individual responsible for monitoring each award. Lack of clarity as to who is monitoring the grant activity means the mission risks not being able to verify that the grant objective is being carried out in the interest of the U.S. Government.

Recommendation 5: Embassy Port of Spain should develop grants monitoring plans to include who is responsible for monitoring activities under the grant. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Consular Affairs

The Consular Section occupied two unconnected wings in the chancery, forcing staff members to leave the section to move between offices. OIG found that consular leadership creatively addressed these potential risks to consular management and oversight by making structural changes to increase line of sight over visa, American Citizens Services, and cashiering operations. The section also positioned managers in each wing to provide on-site supervision of and guidance to FAST Officers and local staff, and improved the appearance and comfort of the waiting room. Appointment wait times for American Citizens Services and visas were low, services for the public efficient, and customer satisfaction high, according to survey results and comments to OIG. Entry level Consular Officers praised the consular chief for providing mentoring and opportunities for professional development, both inside and outside the section. The section had an active public outreach program and engaged in crisis preparedness and management planning that supported ICS goals.

Internal Oversight and External Engagement Need Improvement

The section needed to improve oversight of internal operations as well as engagement with external offices and agencies. This was particularly important as the section expected a 60 percent officer turnover, including the consular chief, in summer 2016. Specifically, OIG advised consular leadership to:

- Perform required cash counts of the consular subcashier in a timely manner.
- Ensure passports and Consular Report of Birth Abroad applications are properly annotated.
- Participate regularly in the embassy's Law Enforcement Working Group.
- Prepare Visas Viper⁴ reporting cables according to the prescribed format, and consider conducting mandatory monthly Visas Viper meetings immediately following the country team meeting.

⁴ The Visa Viper program is a mechanism for overseas posts to provide information on foreign nationals with possible terrorist connections.

Consular Section Does Not Comply with Visa Referral Procedures

The Consular Section did not comply with procedures established in 9 FAM 601.8 for identifying and documenting non-immigrant referral cases. An OIG analysis revealed that 46 of 95 (48.4 percent) visa referral cases submitted in 2015 were improperly documented. These errors included documentation not scanned into the non-immigrant visa electronic application, referrals given the wrong category or attributed to the wrong recommending officer, and, in one case, adjudication by an entry-level officer. Adjudicating officers and LE staff members were trained in accordance with the embassy standard operating procedures, which consular leadership acknowledged did not reflect updated Department guidance. Guidance in 9 FAM 601.8-5 allows no exceptions to processing guidelines, because improper identification and documentation of visa referral cases introduces risks to the integrity and monitoring of the non-immigrant visa referral process.

Recommendation 6: Embassy Port of Spain should implement standard operating procedures to comply with Department standards for processing non-immigrant visa referral cases. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Non-Immigrant Visa Adjudicator Training Lunches

The Deputy Consular Chief and non-immigrant visa line officers held monthly adjudication training sessions over lunch. An officer read sample notes drawn from real cases, and others indicated how they would adjudicate the case, then discussed perspectives and reasoning. The exercise provided a relaxed, interactive setting for officers to learn non-immigrant visa regulations, develop interviewing skills, improve the quality of adjudications, and expand their understanding of how local conditions affect consular work.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Management Operations

OIG reviewed management operations, including Financial Management, Facilities Management, General Services Operations, Human Resources, and Information Management. OIG found one area of noncompliance in the Facilities Management Unit. Management corrected three EEO deficiencies and four Financial Management deficiencies during the inspection.

Prior to 2013, Embassy Port of Spain had a 23-year pattern of Management and General Services Officers curtailments, as noted in OIG inspection reports from 1997, 2002, and 2009. From 2007 to 2013, the embassy had 13 Management Officers, including 10 temporary duty personnel, and 8 General Services Officers, 5 of whom were temporary duty personnel. This long series of staffing gaps, curtailments, and temporary coverage resulted in inadequate supervision, lack of oversight, internal control weaknesses, and lower than average customer satisfaction scores.

The embassy's Management Officer during this inspection was the first to serve a full 3-year tour since 1989 while the General Services Officer was the first to serve a full tour since 2007. Under the Management Officer's direction and with the support of 3 U.S. direct-hires and 61 LE staff members, embassy internal controls have improved since the 2009 OIG inspection of Embassy Port of Spain⁵.

Cost Containment

In accordance with Department cost containment initiatives,⁶ the embassy outsourced its position and grade classification processing and travel voucher processing to regional offices. The Regional Human Resources and Financial Management Officers as well as a Regional Facilities Manager also provided embassy support.

In 2014, the Management Unit implemented the Department's Overseas Cost Containment Initiative⁷ plan to reduce further administrative costs. Embassy officials told OIG they saved \$26,344 by updating the motor pool fleet and using an inventory optimization program.

Customer Satisfaction

In the 2015 International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) customer satisfaction survey, customers ranked 4 of the 29 administrative services as low. The Health Unit, pouching services, procurement, and residential building operations/maintenance services scored below 3.0 on a 5.0 point scale. To improve these services, the embassy switched its air carrier for pouches and added a second weekly delivery. The embassy sent the nurse to Embassy Bogota to shadow operations and brought in a nurse from Port-au-Prince to provide training. The Procurement Unit used the Department's Collaborative Management Initiative to monitor adherence to its performance metrics. The Housing Unit implemented procedures for landlord lease payment deductions for untimely residential maintenance. The 2016 ICASS scores showed improvement in 17 administrative services, including procurement and pouch services.

Facilities Management

Embassy Port of Spain has three U.S. Government-owned properties: the chancery, chief of mission residence, and deputy chief of mission residence.

⁵ OIG, *Inspection of Embassy Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago*, (ISP-I-09-40A, September 2009).

⁶ The Department's Regional Initiatives Council selected the "Top 8 Global Management Priorities" for 2012 to reduce the cost of management operations. The Department asked posts to examine each of these priorities, implement them when possible, and proactively report on their progress.

⁷ The Department's Regional Initiatives Council developed the Overseas Cost Containment Initiative to provide a strategic, collaborative, and measurable program for containing diplomatic platform support costs. It evolved from the "Top 8" Global Management Priorities and is based on lessons learned since FY 2012. The initiative focused on building operations and general services. Results will be measured year-to-year using readily available data.

The Chancery Does Not Meet Department Standards

The chancery did not meet current Department standards. OBO assessed the chancery as seismically deficient in 2009 but a \$1.8-million project to design and construct seismic strengthening was on hold because of insufficient funding. Also in 2009, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security required permanent staff to vacate the former management annex. OBO conducted a Fire and Life Safety inspection in 2015 and found a lack of proper egress. Including the seismic strengthening projects, OBO had 27 unfunded chancery projects totaling \$14 million. OBO planned to construct a new embassy compound in 2018 but because of higher priority embassies, the bureau deferred construction until 2027. Recommendations for security upgrades are contained in the classified annex.

No Assessment of Seismic Vulnerability for Government-Owned and Leased Properties

OBO planned to conduct a seismic assessment of all U.S. Government-owned and short-term leased properties in April 2016. Port of Spain's seismic risk rating is 4 on a scale of 1 to 4. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, Trinidad sits above an earthquake zone. The central fault range, previously thought to be inactive, runs through the middle of the island and is capable of unleashing earthquakes similar to the 7.0-magnitude quake that devastated Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 2010.

Safety, Health, and Environmental Management

In January 2012, the OBO Office of Safety, Health, and Environmental Management conducted an inspection of the embassy's compliance with Department safety, health, and environment management standards. The embassy was working to address the single remaining recommendation.

Fire Safety

The OBO Office of Fire Safety visited in May 2015. That report identified 48 deficiencies, of which the embassy had corrected 35. Embassy staff were in the process of correcting the remaining 13 deficiencies during this inspection.

OIG checked fire extinguishers during its housing and office inspection and found many had expired safety tags, were last checked in 2012, or did not have safety tags attached. The facilities management staff did not perform routine fire extinguisher inspections. According to 15 FAM 842, the embassy must visually inspect every fire extinguisher on a monthly basis to ensure operability and, at a minimum, service them annually. Inspectors must record inspection and maintenance dates, either on the extinguisher inspection tag or electronically. Not conducting regular inspections of fire extinguishers increases the risk of injury or property damage in the event of a fire.

Recommendation 7: Embassy Port of Spain should inspect fire extinguishers in all embassy offices and residences and replace those that do not comply with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Financial Management

The Financial Management Unit addressed all areas of noncompliance identified in the OIG risk assessment, including \$368,654 in the suspense deposit abroad account, the timing of monthly unannounced cash reconciliations, and differential overpayments to five staff members.

Human Resources

The Human Resources Unit complied with Department personnel standards. The embassy was one of three embassies in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs piloting Merit-Based Compensation for LE staff members to more effectively link performance and pay with overall mission goals. The embassy planned to use this system to incentivize and improve LE staff performance.

Equal Employment Opportunity

OIG identified three weaknesses in Embassy Port of Spain's EEO program: the EEO counselor did not have regularly scheduled meetings with the Front Office; the embassy did not have EEO grievance procedures for non-U.S. citizen LE staff as required by 3 FAM 7292 and 3 FAH-2 H-312; and it did not have EEO complaint process information readily available in accordance with 29 CFR 1614. The embassy corrected these deficiencies during the inspection and scheduled EEO training in March 2016.

Information Management and Information Security

The Information Management Section supported more than 150 computer users in the embassy's three buildings despite inadequate network infrastructure. The staff scored 4.23 (out of 5) for computer services in the 2015 ICASS survey. The information management program included unclassified and classified networks, classified and unclassified pouch, local mail, and telephone, radio, and switchboard operations. Eight LE staff members and (when fully staffed) two U.S. direct-hire employees supported these operations. During the inspection, temporary duty personnel from the Regional Information Management Center in Florida assisted the Information Management Officer. A permanent Information Management Specialist was scheduled to arrive in April 2016. OIG's review of the section found areas that needed improvement.

Information Management Staff Oversight

The Information Management Officer was physically isolated from his employees, which hampered his ability to communicate efficiently with the LE staff and oversee their activities. In addition, the LE staff could not meet with the officer in his office because of access restrictions. Although the section met the embassy's day-to-day operational needs, OIG identified procedural deficiencies that could be mitigated with closer staff oversight and guidance.

The Government Accountability Office *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* calls for management to establish reporting lines within an organizational structure so that units

can communicate the information necessary to fulfill each unit's overall responsibilities. Without proper work space configuration, the Information Management Officer is unable to supervise and communicate the information necessary to enable the staff to properly fulfill their duties..

Recommendation 8: Embassy Port of Spain should relocate the information management officer to non-controlled access area in the chancery to facilitate closer oversight of the local employee staff. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Information Systems Security

The Information Management Officer also was the Information Systems Security Officer, but did not perform these duties in accordance with 12 FAM 613.4 because of a lack of time and resources. Guidance in 12 FAM 600 states that information security officers are responsible for implementing Department IT policies and procedures on assigned information systems. The Information Management Officer told OIG that the incoming specialist would assume the information systems security officer role.. OIG advised him to ensure that the specialist had the training, time, and resources to perform these duties. Networks that are not periodically scanned or audited run the risk of losing information security and network availability.

Inadequate Network Infrastructure

Network cabling throughout the chancery and the two annexes did not meet 5 FAH-9 Network Cabling Handbook standards, nor was it properly documented. Section staff told OIG that embassy personnel had for years performed cabling work on an ad hoc basis, without following proper standards or documentation, because of a lack of training. Failure to document and standardize cabling work as required by 12 FAH-10 H-272.3-1 (2) affects network performance and security. Proper network diagrams help staff know how cables are routed, where and how devices are connected to each other, and assist in troubleshooting problems.

Recognizing these issues, Embassy Port of Spain in 2013 arranged for the Regional Information Management Center in Florida to conduct a survey to remediate and retrofit the embassy network infrastructure. However, the embassy did not implement the results of this survey. The current Information Management Officer requested a second study, which was completed in September 2015. This second survey⁸ documented several corrective actions needed to bring network infrastructure in the chancery and annexes up to 5 FAH-9 standards and address fire safety issues. OIG concurred with the study's recommendations. The embassy had not implemented the survey recommendations, but had taken some corrective steps to address network switch connection issues in the unclassified server room and controlled access area.

Recommendation 9: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, should update cabling infrastructure in the embassy chancery and

⁸ Regional Information Management Center,, *IT Infrastructure Remediation, Retrofit Recommendations for Embassy Port of Spain*, (Report Number 954 630-1200).

annexes to comply with Department standards. (Action: Embassy of Port of Spain, in coordination with WHA)

Outdated and Incomplete IT Contingency Plans

Embassy Port of Spain unclassified and classified IT contingency plans were outdated and untested because of a lack of planning and coordination among the Information Management personnel. A November 2014 Bureau of Diplomatic Security Computer Security Assessment⁹ report also noted these issues. According to 12 FAH-10 H-232.1-3, the embassy must update and test contingency plans annually or when systems change. It also stipulates that initial and annual refresher training be provided to personnel based on their contingency planning roles and responsibilities. Without up-to-date contingency plans, the embassy cannot take effective measures to minimize disruption of operations in the event of unplanned IT outages.

Recommendation 10: Embassy Port of Spain should update and test the IT contingency plans for the classified and unclassified computer networks annually or when systems change, and train personnel based on their contingency planning roles and responsibilities on an annual basis. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Inadequate Unclassified Pouch Service

In response to low ICASS customer satisfaction survey scores, the embassy took steps to improve service, including increasing pouch delivery frequency and changing carriers to improve reliability. The section also held a customer outreach event in October 2015 to discuss pouch services and answer questions. As a long-term solution, embassy management also initiated the process to establish its own Diplomatic Post Office, and was waiting for Ministry of Foreign Affairs approval. As a result of these efforts, the 2016 ICASS customer satisfaction survey rose from 2.70 to 3.40.

MISSION SUPPORT SERVICES

Health Unit

Embassy Port of Spain employees consistently ranked the Health Unit in the bottom three of the ICASS services during the past 5 years. In 2016, the score was 2.53 out of 5—lower than the regional average of 4.09 and the worldwide average of 4.22. Health services also was the lowest ranked of the quality of life elements in OIG surveys. OIG advised the Health Unit provider on ways to improve patient-provider relations and made suggestions to the Management Officer regarding establishing standard operating procedures to inform employees how to deal with health emergencies.

⁹ Computer Security Assessment, U.S. Embassy Port of Spain ESC Montevideo 2014-011.

The non-resident RMO/P designated to cover Embassy Port of Spain did not visit during 2015, despite repeated requests from embassy leadership. The Office of Medical Services told OIG this was due to the unexpected curtailment of the designated RMO/P, a dearth of candidates to fill the position, urgent priorities at other posts that did not allow the two other regional RMO/Ps to provide temporary coverage for Embassy Port of Spain, and the Bureau of Human Resources' denial of the Office of Medical Services request to fill the vacant position in November 2015.

In February 2016, one of the other RMO/Ps assigned temporary coverage visited Embassy Port of Spain to meet with a cross-section of the embassy employees and brief embassy leadership. Embassy officials told OIG the visit was productive and appreciated by embassy staff as a whole and that RMO/P attention to the factors affecting employee morale, including a recommendation on the need for cross-cultural training, was particularly helpful. The newly assigned RMO/P responsible for Embassy Port of Spain arrived in Sao Paulo in January 2016 and told OIG of his intent to visit Port of Spain in early May 2016 and to address the issues raised during the February 2016 visit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Embassy Port of Spain should develop a structured professional development and mentoring program for First- and Second-Tour employees and issue it in an embassy Management Policy. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 2: Embassy Port of Spain should require that employees comply with Department guidance and preserve official correspondence by using the record email system. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 3: Embassy Port of Spain should implement a standardized filing system that complies with Department standards for records management. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 4: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of International Information Programs, should develop a strategy to repurpose the Information Resource Center and to reassign the locally employed staff to duties that support program priorities. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with IIP)

Recommendation 5: Embassy Port of Spain should develop grants monitoring plans to include who is responsible for monitoring activities under the grant. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 6: Embassy Port of Spain should implement standard operating procedures to comply with Department standards for processing non-immigrant visa referral cases. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 7: Embassy Port of Spain should inspect fire extinguishers in all embassy offices and residences and replace those that do not comply with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 8: Embassy Port of Spain should relocate the information management officer to non-controlled access area in the chancery to facilitate closer oversight of the local employee staff. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 9: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, should update cabling infrastructure in the embassy chancery and annexes to comply with Department standards. (Action: Embassy of Port of Spain, in coordination with WHA)

Recommendation 10: Embassy Port of Spain should update and test the IT contingency plans for the classified and unclassified computer networks annually or when systems change, and train personnel based on their contingency planning roles and responsibilities on an annual basis. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

Title	Name	Arrival Date
Chiefs of Mission:		
Ambassador	Vacant	
Deputy Chief of Mission/Charge d'Affaires	Margaret Diop	7/2013
Chiefs of Sections:		
Management	David Kloesel	1/2013
Consular/Acting Deputy Chief of Mission	Alexander Delorey	7/2013
Political	Dexter Payne	8/2015
Economic	Jacob Stevens	7/2014
Public Affairs	Steven Weeks	8/2014
Regional Affairs	Charles Ford	6/2014
Regional Security	Nicole Gallagher	12/2013
Other Agencies:		
Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives	Leonard Codisport	12/2015
Centers for Disease Control Prevention	Nyla Lyons	1/2010
Customs and Border Protection	Robert Gross	4/2014
Drug Enforcement Administration	Robert Kennedy	1/2014
Foreign Agricultural Service	Lionel Wayne DeChi	2/2007
Department of Defense	Col. Claudia Carrizales	11/2014
Legal Attaché	Edward Gray	07/2015

Source: Embassy Port of Spain

APPENDIX A: PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

This inspection was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2012 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspector's Handbook, as issued by the OIG for the Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

Purpose and Scope

The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State, the Chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors. Inspections cover three broad areas, consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980:

- **Policy Implementation:** whether policy goals and objectives are being effectively achieved; whether U.S. interests are being accurately and effectively represented; and whether all elements of an office or mission are being adequately coordinated.
- **Resource Management:** whether resources are being used and managed with maximum efficiency, effectiveness, and economy and whether financial transactions and accounts are properly conducted, maintained, and reported.
- **Management Controls:** whether the administration of activities and operations meets the requirements of applicable laws and regulations; whether internal management controls - have been instituted to ensure quality of performance and reduce the likelihood of mismanagement; whether instance of fraud, waste, or abuse exist; and whether adequate steps for detection, correction, and prevention have been taken.

Methodology

OIG applied a risk-based approach to this inspection consistent with Comptroller General of the United States Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government. OIG collected and analyzed data from multiple sources and used various survey instruments and methods to assess risk and plan its fieldwork:

- Risk indicators and priorities developed by OIG.
- Questionnaires administered to major stakeholders, including Department functional and regional bureaus, key embassy leaders/managers, and individual U.S. direct-hire and locally employed staff members.
- Consultations with Washington-based Department and interagency bureaus and offices.

In conducting this inspection, OIG validated information gleaned during the risk assessment, reviewed pertinent records and survey instrument results, conducted on-site interviews, and

reviewed the substance of the draft report and its findings with offices, individuals, organizations, and activities affected by this review.

APPENDIX B: FY 2015 STAFFING AND FUNDING BY AGENCY

Agency	U.S. Direct- Hire Staff	U.S. Local- Hire Staff	Foreign National Staff	Total Staff ¹⁰	Total Funding FY2015 (\$)
Department of State					
Diplomatic & Consular Programs	22	4	22	48	1,032,996
International Cooperative Administrative Support Services	2	2	60	64	8,126,611
Consular Affairs					1,130,544
Public Diplomacy	1		8	9	566,723
Diplomatic Security	3	2	18	23	689,516
Marine Security	7		5	12	190,000
Representation					26,255
Overseas Buildings Operations			1	1	1,547,145
Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement					2,152,567
Subtotal	35	8	114	157	15,462,357
Department of Agriculture					
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service			2	2	83,923
Subtotal			2	2	83,923
Department of Defense					
Southern Command/Military Liaison Office	4		3	7	
Other – MLO					77,080
Subtotal	4		3	7	77,080
Department of Justice					
Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms					75,707
Drug Enforcement Administration	6		1	7	336,395
Federal Bureau of Investigation	1			1	
Legal Attaché's Office					123,826
Subtotal	7		1	8	535,928
Department of Homeland Security					
Customs and Border Protection	1			1	111,000
Subtotal	1			1	111,000
Foreign Commercial Service					
					6,715
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention			1	1	131,800
Total	47	8	121	176	\$16,408,803

Source: Generated by OIG from data provided by the Department.

¹⁰ Authorized staff.

ABBREVIATIONS

A/DCM	Acting Deputy Chief of Mission
CDA	Chargé d’Affaires
Department	Department of State
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
FAH	Foreign Affairs Handbook
FAM	Foreign Affairs Manual
FAST	First- and Second-Tour
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
ICS	Integrated Country Strategy
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
LE	Locally Employed
OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
PEPFAR	President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
RMO/P	Regional Medical Officer/Psychiatrist

OIG INSPECTION TEAM MEMBERS

Pamela Slutz, Team Leader

Mike Hurley, Deputy Team Leader

Scott Boswell

Jay Dehmlow

Martha Fikru

Timothy Wildy



HELP FIGHT

FRAUD. WASTE. ABUSE.

1-800-409-9926

[OIG.state.gov/HOTLINE](https://oig.state.gov/HOTLINE)

If you fear reprisal, contact the
OIG Whistleblower Ombudsman to learn more about your rights:

OIGWPEAOmbuds@state.gov

oig.state.gov

Office of Inspector General • U.S. Department of State • P.O. Box 9778 • Arlington, VA 22219